



## ANGLICAN CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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# BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY / INVITATION SUNDAY

**A. This section to be read by all those who do not know what BTCS is all about  
(If you know what the concept is, please go to section B. for information about 2016)**

**What is Back to Church Sunday (BTCS)?** A major Provincial initiative that GtC hosts for all our dioceses since 2011. It may be called “**Back to Church Sunday**” or “**Invitation Sunday**”, depending which name you prefer. Go to <http://www.backtochurch.co.uk/home> and hear what many others have to say about **BTCS**.

**Back to Church Sunday** is now the single largest local-church invitational initiative in the world. It is based on the simplest and shortest step in evangelism - when we invite someone we already know to our church. While the initial focus was to invite ‘back’ those who used to attend church, others who do not attend can also be invited, gently encouraged and warmly welcomed. Thus, this season could also be called “**Invitation Sunday**”. Creative changes can be made to include your weekday congregations.

It is a very simple way of getting the congregation to reach out to others. First started in 2004, it has already proven to be very effective. Churches from **all traditions** have embraced this resource.

There are other benefits – like intentionally creating a more welcoming atmosphere among our worshipping communities. **We have given a lot more detail below in section C** for those who are not acquainted with BTCS.

Our hope is that this initiative will be embraced by all of our dioceses since it is a Provincial initiative. Anyone can embrace this initiative with relative ease. May we thus humbly encourage you to please give it serious consideration? **Please discuss this with your parish and register your participation before 1 September on the GtC website: [www.growingthechurch.org.za](http://www.growingthechurch.org.za) – click on “events” and you will find “BTCS”. Here you will also find all the material that you will need. This is the preferred method to register. If you cannot register electronically, email Estelle, GtC Office Manager: [office@growingthechurch.org.za](mailto:office@growingthechurch.org.za) or call her ASAP on 021 763 1315.**

May our Lord bless you and keep you.

Yours in Christ

*†Martin: St Mark  
the Evangelist.*

Bishop Martin Breytenbach  
Liaison & Chair of GtC Board

The Revd Trevor Pearce  
Director: GtC

## **B. “BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY 2016”**

For more information and encouragement, go to <http://www.backtochurch.co.uk/home> and hear what others have to say in the UK, or simply Google “Back to Church Sunday” and learn from the written and DVD presentations produced by others.

### **1. Training and information about BTCS**

In 2012 we had the privilege of hosting Michael Harvey, founder of BTCS, as a key-note speaker at the Anglicans Ablaze Conference. He spoke twice and copies of his talks, “**Back to Church Sunday**” and “**Evangelism that anyone can do**” can be purchased from our office at R150 for both. This includes the cost of packaging and posting.

We will also provide you with the 12 steps process, poster, prayer card and invitation card on request. Last year’s training is also available on DVD. Request these things when you register or contact Estelle Adams at [office@growingthechurch.org.za](mailto:office@growingthechurch.org.za) / 021 763 1315.

### **2. When will BTCS take place**

We are providing two opportunities this year:

- The international date – **25 Sept 2016**. Join with hundreds of churches around the world in hosting BTCS.
- You may also choose a date of your own which may coincide with a significant time or event in the life of your parish, or sometime at the beginning of next year. But first prize is to be able to tell your congregation that they are engaged in an event that thousands of others are engaged in at the same time.

## **C. “BACKGROUND TO BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY”**

BTCS has grown beyond all expectations since the first one in Greater Manchester in 2004. In 2009 about 6,000 churches across the world (4,650 in the UK) invited their family, friends, neighbours and colleagues to church. As a result over 80,000 extra people attended church on **Back to Church Sunday** in the UK alone, with a long-term result of around 10,000 people added to the church in one day! Many who did not immediately join, had a new fire rekindled in their hearts and at very least had made a new connection.

Back to Church Sunday is an international initiative encouraging churches to hold a **Back to Church Sunday** event on the last Sunday of September, preceded by training in things like welcoming, how to pray for and encourage people to come back to church and so on. It is most effective when it is linked with an up-coming nurture course that returners can be invited to or other initiatives that help build relationships and community. The Alpha Course is great as well as “Rooted in Jesus” (RinJ) or “The God who is There” – the more urban version of RinJ. The aim is to reach people who are not attending church, through the people who are. The success of this initiative is seen not in percentage or numbers but as one person learning to invite another person. Furthermore, it is not intended to be a one-day-wonder. On the contrary,

it is intended to develop a warmer and welcoming atmosphere at churches that lasts all year-round. The best encouragement emerging from this success is that so many Anglicans are acting together as **one big family from many cultures located in many parts of the world!** Simply click on: <http://www.backtochurch.co.uk/home>

**Growing the Church is encouraging our bishops, clergy and church leaders to consider adopting “Back to Church Sunday” as a diocesan and parish initiative.** It is an initiative that is profound in its simplicity. GtC will coordinate the provision of suitable materials like posters, leaflets, invitations etc. via our website: [www.growingthechurch.org.za](http://www.growingthechurch.org.za) . You may also write to us at [office@growingthechurch.org.za](mailto:office@growingthechurch.org.za) . Please share your creative ideas with us which could add value to our context. We would love to hear from you!

The benefits of having ‘Back to Church Sunday’ is that, as a church prepares for BTCS we can brush up on how we welcome people who are new, those who have not been around for a while and our regulars, as well as our hospitality. But more importantly, we are inculcating evangelism through a simple invitation. One also has to think through how we encourage those who respond to the invitation to keep coming back, and help them to become and remain connected to the church family.

Church groups can easily and unintentionally become ‘closed’ groups. Participation in the life of the parish - perhaps through Rooted in Jesus, Companions in Christ or Alpha may contribute, among many other offerings.

Each BTCS event is measured through evaluation forms completed by participating churches with transparency about the results. They ‘listen’ to feedback and learn from it. The strength of the **Back to Church Sunday** began and continues to be the network of participating Anglican churches and dioceses that learn and work together. Resources and learning’s are shared and the cumulative success becomes a spur.

Participating churches will decide what will work best for them, but in general the BTCS process is as follows:

1. Churches sign up for BTCS – online or manually – details below...
2. Churches order BTCS packs from the supplier - Posters, Invitations, Prayer Cards, Gift Postcards, and T-Shirts etc. Each year BTCS produces a growing range of free, downloadable resources. In the past these have included sermon resources, service sheet templates, PowerPoint templates, logos, meditations and “top tips” for welcoming people.
3. Churches begin to pray and plan their BTCS services and events – preparation, execution and follow-up that is designed for a hoped for longer term relationship.
4. Details of BTCS events are written or printed onto invitations
5. Church members personally hand out invitations to friends / family / neighbours / colleagues etc.
6. Church members keep hold of prayer cards and pray for the friends they have invited
7. People coming back to church are offered an especially warm welcome when they arrive on the day and shown great hospitality. (Part of the training is about maintaining such warmth over the long-term).
8. People who have come to church are given a gift post card to take home as a reminder of the day – this can be overprinted with details of future events and services

**Back to Church Sunday** works best with Bishops, GtC Coordinators, clergy and leaders who proactively communicate information to the churches in their dioceses. Each participating parish should thus raise up a suitable BTCS Team to assist with this process.

Please register on the GtC website as a participant before 1 September (preferred method); or by email: [office@growingthechurch.org.za](mailto:office@growingthechurch.org.za) or telephone: 021 763 1315, so that we can include you when producing resource templates.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Trevor Pearce', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Revd Trevor Pearce  
Director: GtC